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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request contained in the letter dated 21 December 2007 from the President of the Security Council (S/2007/754), in which the Council called on me to report on the fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) every six months. The report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2010. It focuses on country-specific political developments within the subregion, on cross-border and cross-cutting issues in West Africa and on activities undertaken by UNOWA in cooperation with other United Nations entities and regional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as civil society and other international organizations.

II. Country-specific political developments and UNOWA good offices

2. During the reporting period, a number of West African countries continued to be affected by the political crises resulting from flawed or contested electoral processes, unconstitutional changes of government or other threats to constitutional legality and governance. In Côte d'Ivoire, allegations of fraud in voter registration exercise and disputes over finalization of the voters' list brought the electoral process to a standstill and raised doubts about prospects for a timely and effective resolution of the crisis. The unconstitutional changes of government and threats to democratic processes that occurred in parts of the subregion also posed significant threats to the political, social and economic stabilization of the subregion. In Nigeria, constitutional and electoral reforms are ongoing in the lead-up to the 2011 presidential elections.

3. In collaboration with ECOWAS and the African Union, UNOWA, under the leadership of my Special Representative, remained actively engaged in Guinea and the Niger to promote a return to constitutional order. UNOWA also worked collaboratively with the United Nations country team in Lomé and the ECOWAS Mediator for Togo, President Compaoré of Burkina Faso, to ensure that the presidential election of 4 March 2010 was held as scheduled and in a peaceful environment. In close collaboration with the United Nations country team, UNOWA

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has also been following developments in Benin in the lead-up to the March 2011 elections.

Guinea

4. The situation in Guinea has evolved positively following the Ouagadougou Joint Declaration of 15 January, which provided for General Sékouba Konaté to serve as interim head of State during a six-month transition. All the transitional institutions, including the Government of National Unity headed by a Prime Minister and tasked with preparing the presidential elections, and the National Transitional Council, charged with the responsibility of revising the Constitution and the electoral code, were established by 15 March 2010. General Konaté issued a decree on 6 May confirming the date of 27 June 2010 proposed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) for the first round of the presidential elections. He also declared that Guineans in the diaspora should participate in the elections. The revised Constitution and the new electoral code were promulgated by decree on 7 and 24 May, respectively, thus completing the legal framework for the election. On 24 May, CENI published the list of eligible candidates. Twenty-four out of 42 candidates were declared fit to contest the presidential elections. On 18 May, a special force comprising 16,000 national police and gendarmerie elements was created by decree to provide security during the elections.

5. Despite these positive developments, a number of challenges remain, including legal and logistical issues related to the voters' list, socio-economic hardship and the potential of future unrest. These are in addition to financial constraints that have limited the Government's capacity to provide basic services for the population and meet the demands of the Army. Besides potential social instability resulting from frequent strikes by various sectors of the economy, there was also a serious concern over the recurrent disturbances in the Guinea Forestière region, where disgruntled groups were still calling for the return of Captain Dadis Camara.

6. The thirty-seventh ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government and the International Contact Group on Guinea, which held four meetings during the reporting period, encouraged Guinean stakeholders to continue with the implementation of the transition and called for international assistance to stabilize the political and socio-economic situation. They urged Guineans to also ensure that those responsible for the massacre of 28 September 2009 are held accountable for their actions, and to press upon the targeted officials to abide by their commitment not to stand for the upcoming presidential elections. They further called for a review of regional (ECOWAS and African Union) and international sanctions. ECOWAS, in particular, directed its Commission's President to come up with a revised list targeting only those found to have been directly involved in the massacre, or impeding the implementation of the Ouagadougou Declaration.

7. At all meetings of the International Contact Group on Guinea, my Special Representative underscored the need for the increased engagement of the international community, particularly in the remaining but critical phase of the transition, to ensure that socio-economic and political tensions do not disrupt the peaceful transition and therefore do not jeopardize the return to constitutional order. He identified two categories of challenges facing Guinea, the short-term priorities to be addressed before and during the elections, and issues of a structural nature that

require long-term planning and funding. For the first category, there is a need for quick-impact projects such as confidence-building measures aimed at reassuring the armed forces that their demands are being given due consideration, thus preventing security sector reform issues from becoming a destabilizing factor. The second category should begin to be addressed immediately after the elections with long-term development assistance from Guinea's bilateral and multilateral partners.

8. During the reporting period, UNOWA put great emphasis on the importance of stability in Guinea and its implications for West Africa, particularly the Mano River Union States. On 16 January 2010, my Special Representative undertook a joint mission to Ouagadougou with his counterparts from ECOWAS and the African Union, during which they persuaded Captain Dadis Camara not to return to Guinea, thus allowing for a smooth implementation of the Ouagadougou Joint Declaration. By the time of the meeting of the International Contact Group in early April, however, difficulties had emerged in the form of tension between the Prime Minister and the President of the National Transitional Council over the adoption of the Constitution and the date of the presidential election, which threatened to undermine the entire transition process. To address these difficulties, my Special Representative visited Conakry again on 22 April 2010 to hold extensive discussions with the Prime Minister and the President of the Council. He subsequently initiated a joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations mission to Conakry on 29 and 30 April, in an effort to pre-empt obstacles to the holding of the presidential election. Together with the African Union Representative, he used the occasion of the presentation ceremony of the joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations report of the Guinea security sector assessment on 4 May to revisit the issue with General Konaté in the presence of the Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Presidency. As a result, a consultative meeting on 5 May involving all stakeholders led to the National Transitional Council adopting the draft Constitution by consensus. This paved the way for the decrees promulgating the new Constitution and the electoral law, which were signed on 7 and 24 May 2010, respectively. Since then, my Special Representative has been monitoring the situation in liaison with the concerned stakeholders. With the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office, a senior political adviser has been deployed to UNOWA to assist my Special Representative on the evolving situation in Guinea. My Special Representative's efforts, in coordination with ECOWAS and the African Union, helped in overcoming a deadlock that could have led to the postponement of the presidential elections.

9. The Government of Guinea convened on 24 and 25 May 2010 a workshop on security during elections in Conakry with the support of UNOWA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The meeting discussed Guinea's national plan to provide security during the presidential election and concluded with a set of practical recommendations on the implementation of that plan. On 9 April, my Special Representative met with women leaders of the main civil society organizations in Guinea and from the Mano River Union region to encourage them to continue to play a positive role in support of the transition and in promoting violence free elections. As a follow-up to that meeting, UNOWA is closely monitoring women's participation in the transition process.

Niger

10. At the beginning of the reporting period, Niger witnessed a serious reversal of its democratic achievements since 1999. The country experienced a turbulent phase following President Tandja's controversial decision to amend the Constitution and organize a referendum that brought about the Sixth Republic. These actions were rejected by the opposition and a significant section of the population. The inter-Nigerian dialogue, initiated in December 2009 under the auspices of ECOWAS, broke down as President Tandja's insistence on maintaining the Sixth Republic could not be reconciled with the opposition's demand for a return to the Fifth Republic and the 1999 Constitution as a fundamental prerequisite for negotiations. On 18 February, President Tandja was ousted in a military coup. The Conseil Supreme pour la Restauration de la Democratie (CSRD) took control of the country with the declared objectives of restoring democratic rule and reconciling the people of the Niger. Although the coup was generally welcomed by the population as a positive step towards the restoration of the rule of law, it was still considered by the international community as an unconstitutional seizure of power.

11. As a result of the efforts of the international community since 18 February, including those of the United Nations in general and UNOWA in particular, the transitional authorities have made significant progress in the efforts to return the country to constitutional legality. On 21 February, my Special Representative undertook a joint mission to Niamey with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security to assess the intention of the new authorities, encourage a speedy return to constitutional order and explore possible areas in support of the transition with key stakeholders and representatives of the international community. The mission encouraged CSRD to opt for the shortest possible transition focusing on creating conditions for holding free and transparent elections, since an extended transition with long-term objectives could further destabilize the situation and keep away much needed international assistance. My Special Representative particularly advised the new authorities to acknowledge the existence of the food crisis and to extend their full and transparent cooperation to the international community in addressing this situation. He also suggested that CSRD consider formalizing its commitment not to stand for election as that would strengthen the basis for international cooperation. On 12 March, the head of CSRD signed a decree reiterating and officially confirming that point. Since then, all the transitional institutions have been established. The Conseil Consultatif National is tasked with recommending, inter alia, the programme and the duration of the transition period. The Comité Technique des Textes Fondamentaux is assigned to review the Constitution and the Observatoire National de la Démocratie et des Droits de l'Homme is mandated to investigate human rights abuses and conduct human rights education.

12. On 15 April, my Special Representative returned to Niamey to assess the progress made since his last visit. He advised the transitional authorities, especially the head of the Conseil Consultatif National and the President of CRSD, to decide on the shortest possible transition to restore constitutional rule and to allow for the continued and full support of the international community. On 23 April 2010, the Conseil Consultatif National proposed a timetable for a transition to culminate in the elected President's swearing-in ceremony on 1 March 2011. On 5 May, CSRD confirmed the one-year transition as proposed by the Conseil Consultatif National with the following revised sequencing: (a) referendum; (b) local elections;

(c) legislative elections; and (d) presidential election. Accordingly, the new electoral code was promulgated by decree on 27 May, and the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission was designated. A referendum on the revised Constitution is scheduled to take place in October 2010.

13. Despite these encouraging developments, the Niger is still confronted with serious socio-economic and humanitarian challenges. The lack of financial capacity to provide basic services to the population and the growing food crisis, acknowledged by the military Government, remain potential factors of social destabilization that, in turn, represent a significant threat to the transition. The authorities have stressed that the success of the transition would depend largely on the capacity of the Government to ensure social stability through the provision of basic social services. They called for the intervention of the United Nations in support of preventing social instability in the country.

Togo

14. Presidential elections in Togo were held on 4 March amid growing tension between the ruling party, the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT) and opposition parties, in particular the Union des Forces de Changement (UFC), on various aspects of the electoral process, as outlined in my previous report. Although the voting proceeded in a peaceful atmosphere, the results announced by the Constitutional Court on 6 March declaring the incumbent President, Faure Gnassingbé, the winner with 60.92 per cent of votes, were deeply contested. Opposition parties, rallied in a coalition, the Front Républicain pour l'Alternance et le Changement (FRAC), rejected the results and initiated a series of demonstrations to request recognition of what they claimed to be a clear victory of the UFC candidate, Jean-Pierre Fabre. Despite these demonstrations, President Gnassingbé was inaugurated for a second term on 3 May 2010. On 7 May, Gilbert Houngbo was reappointed Prime Minister with the main task of creating a unity government with participation from the opposition. Negotiations between the ruling party and UFC culminated in an agreement with UFC President, Gilchrist Olympio, for the participation of seven UFC members in the new government, which was formed on 28 May. This engendered a split within UFC, as some of its members, including the presidential candidate, rejected the proposition to join a unity government.

15. In preparation for the contested 4 March presidential election, UNOWA closely monitored the political and security situation in the country, and my Special Representative maintained close contacts with the ECOWAS Facilitator, President Compaoré of Burkina Faso, and national stakeholders, to help promote a conducive environment for a credible and peaceful election. On 5 and 6 January, my Special Representative and the President of the ECOWAS Commission undertook a joint visit to Lomé to exchange views with national and international stakeholders on the pre-electoral situation and to establish a national mechanism for dialogue to resolve disagreements surrounding the electoral process. As a follow-up to that visit and a needs assessment mission that had taken place in September 2009, a joint mission of UNOWA and the Department of Political Affairs was deployed to Lomé from 3 to 9 February 2010, in consultation with the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team, to monitor progress made in preparation for the election and to convey the continued commitment of the United Nations to assisting Togo hold a peaceful and credible election. In the aftermath of the March 2010 election, and with a view to reducing the risk of tension in future elections, discussions are

already under way between UNOWA, the United Nations country team and relevant departments and agencies of the United Nations to develop a comprehensive support strategy for Togo's peace consolidation and democratization agenda. UNOWA will continue to closely follow the post-election developments, especially with respect to the participation of the opposition in the Government and the efforts to promote national reconciliation.

Benin

16. During the reporting period, tension was observed in Benin, as the country prepares for general elections scheduled for March 2011. The controversy over the use of the computerized permanent voters' list for the 2011 elections polarized the political debate. Even though the Government agrees with the opposition on the need for the computerized permanent voters' list, they disagree on the time frame for the completion of voter registration. The Government wants the system to be ready for the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections, while the opposition insists that more time is needed to ensure the credibility of the computerized list and that the old manual voters' list should therefore be used for the upcoming elections.

III. Developments and trends in cross-border and cross-cutting issues

A. Economic, social and humanitarian factors

17. Despite encouraging economic growth rates, the damaging effects of the global downturn continue to be deeply felt by most West African populations. After a period of decline prompted by the global financial and economic recession, West African economies are now improving, as evidenced by the subregional growth rate, which is expected to reach 4.7 per cent in 2010, against 4.4 per cent in 2009. The continuation of this encouraging trend will depend on the pace of global economic recovery, as well as the sustainability of revenue flows from natural resources and agricultural products, tourism, remittances from overseas workers and international aid. The benefits of the improving economic situation, however, are yet to trickle down to the majority of the population in the region. In this regard, measures to reduce the gap between rich and poor and improve governance are necessary for accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, strengthening social cohesion and peace consolidation. With respect to Millennium Development Goal 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, half of the countries in the region are on track, six of which are early achievers, while two are off-track and six are actually regressing, as indicated in the latest publication of the African Economic Outlook report of the African Development Bank.

18. Irregular rains in 2009 led to severe shortages of pasture and water and a poor harvest in early 2010 in several West African countries. These factors contributed to worsening food insecurity, particularly in the Niger, but also in Mali and Mauritania. The current food crisis is emblematic of the spate of humanitarian crises in West Africa. An estimated 10 million people are said to be affected in the Sahel region alone, 80 per cent of whom are located in the Niger. The recurrence of diseases such as polio, meningitis, measles and lassa fever has exacerbated the vulnerability of already impoverished households. Mali and Mauritania deserve particular attention

from the international community, with 260,000 and 370,000 people affected, respectively. The acknowledgement by the new authorities in the Niger of the seriousness of food insecurity and malnutrition has created a more conducive environment for the United Nations and the wider international community to address humanitarian concerns in that country. In April 2010, the United Nations and the Government of the Niger launched an international appeal for $133 million to assist affected communities. The amount of $20.5 million was allocated during the first three months of the year through the Central Emergency Response Fund to alleviate the food crisis, assist farmers and herders and respond to emergency health needs in a number of countries in the region. Resources are still needed for the consolidated appeal for West Africa for 2010, seeking $507 million to support emergency relief activities in the region, including in the Niger and other affected countries. Of this target, only 24 per cent is currently funded. Resources are also needed to facilitate the movement of humanitarian personnel and relief items between Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. During his visit to West Africa from 23 to 28 April, John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, reiterated the need for comprehensive long-term strategies to address the recurrent and complex nature of the food crisis and malnutrition in that part of the Sahel and West Africa as a whole. In the engagements he had with the highest level of political leadership and other stakeholders he underscored, inter alia, the need to strengthen cooperation among the various actors committed to humanitarian action, especially cooperation between local governments and the United Nations.

B. Drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime

19. I remain greatly concerned over the continuing scourge of drug trafficking in West Africa. This is in spite of the fact that in the reporting period, the quantities of hard drugs seized by national law enforcement agencies continued to decline. As I highlighted in my previous reports, this could be the result of increasingly sophisticated operations launched by drug cartels, rather than the outcome of more effective national and international responses. In the reporting period, West Africa remained a major transit route for cocaine trafficking. The use of the Sahara desert as transit route for narcotics, in particular cocaine and cannabis, has heightened insecurity in an already volatile region, much of which remains outside the control of national security and defence forces. I also remain seriously concerned that terrorist networks and rebel groups could derive significant economic benefit from criminal activities, including drug and arms trafficking. The frequent instances of the kidnapping of foreigners in the Sahel band in exchange for ransom payments are a reflection of this worrying trend.

20. Heroin trafficking, which has been a serious concern in West Africa for several decades, received heightened attention again in recent months, following an increase in seizures in a number of countries, including those emerging from conflict. Reports from specialized institutions, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), show that heroin and cocaine cartels seem to operate independently, while possibly turning to the same intermediaries for logistics and money-laundering. Increasing trends in the local consumption of cocaine highlighted in my previous reports confirm that the subregion is no longer only a transit route, but is also a consumption area. In States where there is massive

unemployment and a volatile political situation, drug consumption among youths could serve as a trigger for violence.

21. The security situation in the Sahel continued to deteriorate during the reporting period. The menace of criminal and terrorist activities, including the kidnapping of foreigners and attacks on national security forces, as well as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, continued to undermine regional peace and stability. It also threatened the safety of civilians. The insufficient capacity of Governments to adequately address the security challenges they face remains a matter of concern. Furthermore, the insurgencies that some Governments face have weakened their ability to provide national security and enforce law and order on their territory. At a ministerial meeting on this issue, which took place in Algiers on 16 March, the seven countries of the Sahel-Sahara region, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger agreed to cooperate in the fight against the causes and factors of insecurity in the Sahel and to take advantage of technical assistance opportunities offered by multilateral mechanisms, namely those provided for by Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003) and 1904 (2009). This was followed by a meeting of the Chiefs of Army Staff in the same countries on 14 April, which resulted in the establishment of a regional mechanism for coordinating the fight against terrorist activities.

C. Governance, human rights and gender

22. Although most West African countries remained politically stable during the period under review, a number of threats to democratic processes continued to hamper prospects for sustainable peace and security in the subregion. Progress made in strengthening human rights, promoting gender and encouraging civil society institutions was undermined by increased election-related tension and violence and weaknesses in most national armed and security forces. The resurgence of coups d'état in West Africa, which I have consistently denounced, and the major role played by the armed forces in these coups, are a reflection of the difficult civil-military relationships in situations of bad governance.

23. Some countries have made progress towards the organization of peaceful and credible elections, while, in others, tension and violence remain an ever present possibility. Many West African countries continued to be faced with limited availability of credible and up-to-date data on demographic trends, a challenge that fuels disputes over voter registration, among other difficulties, and impacts negatively on efforts to consolidate peace and promote democratic governance.

24. The rise of ethnic and religious intolerance, local insurgencies and continued violations of human rights in some countries, including violence against women and girls, threatened both national and regional peace and stability. Encouraging signs include the active participation of human rights defenders and civil society in Guinea and in the Niger in the political transition, including in raising awareness on the critical issue of the food crisis. Compared to 2005, the presidential elections in Togo of 4 March 2010 revealed an encouraging decline in human rights violations. This is partly as a result of joint regional and United Nations efforts in the lead-up to the election in providing training to security forces and the youth, as well as in raising public awareness on peace and respect for human rights during the electoral processes. There is also a growing interest in promoting women's participation in

peace and security efforts within the subregion. Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have made steady progress in the implementation of their national plans on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Sierra Leone launched its plan on 12 June, while Guinea-Bissau and Guinea are now finalizing theirs.

IV. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

25. In addition to its good offices, which are described in section II of the present report, during the reporting period UNOWA focused on a number of critical issues, including drug trafficking and organized crime, and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations.

A. United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

26. UNOWA continued to promote information-sharing and interlinkages among United Nations entities operating in West Africa on cross-border and regional threats to peace and security. The sixth meeting of Dakar-based United Nations regional offices and other entities was organized by UNOWA on 21 January 2010 to discuss the political developments in the subregion and to further coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime as well as food insecurity. The eighteenth high-level meeting of Heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa, organized by UNOWA in Dakar on 25 February 2010, reviewed recent political and pre-election developments in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, the Niger, Guinea and Togo. As a result of these meetings, United Nations agencies acknowledged the destabilizing impact of domestic crises on the entire subregion and agreed to work together in support of national efforts for peaceful and fair elections, as well as security sector reform. Taking into account their respective mandates, these meetings also provided an opportunity for United Nations entities in the region to identify ways of addressing threats posed by cross-border organized crime and drug trafficking, human trafficking, climate change, terrorist activities and food insecurity with a focus on the Sahel. As a result of these meetings, United Nations agencies have been providing active support to the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, which was established by NGOs and United Nations agencies within the framework of the West Africa consolidated appeal process. UNOWA is also developing a regional initiative that will aim to strengthen the links between political, socio-economic and humanitarian interventions in the Sahel region and facilitate the development of a comprehensive conflict prevention framework in this area, in collaboration with all the United Nations agencies concerned. In response to the food crisis, my Special Representative continued to work closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations bodies to ensure continued monitoring of the situation.

27. In order to follow up on the recommendations of the sixth meeting of Dakar-based United Nations regional offices pertaining to ways of assisting the subregion in addressing the challenges facing the Sahel countries, UNOWA organized a meeting with the resident coordinators from West African Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger) and regional directors of United Nations

entities on 12 April. The meeting reiterated the pivotal role of UNOWA as the interface between the United Nations system and ECOWAS, and agreed on (a) conducting joint analyses on cross-cutting issues in the Sahel, such as food security; (b) organizing, in cooperation with ECOWAS, a regional forum for consultation; and (c) advocating for a Security Council visit to West Africa to show support for the ongoing peace efforts in the subregion. The meeting also resulted in refining the United Nations inter-agency proposed initiative on the Sahel.

28. UNOWA enhanced United Nations efforts to address the humanitarian situation in the subregion by convening, on 22 March 2010, a meeting of heads of United Nations regional agencies to discuss what could potentially be the greatest cereal shortage in a decade, with a particular focus on the Niger. Participants stressed the need to promote subregional solidarity, such as lifting tariff barriers between countries of the Sahel in order to facilitate supply of food within the subregion.

29. During the reporting period, UNOWA worked closely with the Department of Political Affairs in support of the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to promote the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the Sahel-Sahara region. The Strategy recommends a series of measures to address the root causes of terrorism and to strengthen State capacity, and provide pertinent indications on how to deal with insecurity in the Sahel. The modalities for proper implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the Sahel, which gives priority to local ownership and leadership, are being finalized by the Task Force in collaboration with the Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA.

30. The second consultative conference between UNOWA and United Nations resident coordinators in West Africa, held in Dakar on 13 April 2010, with the participation of directors of United Nations regional offices, further reviewed ways of improving the strategic coordination and coherence of United Nations efforts to better address the major challenges facing West Africa and promote stability and development in the subregion. The meeting proposed that the ECOWAS-UNOWA workplan be adjusted to accommodate economic, social and humanitarian matters. That issue will be considered further during the revision of the ECOWAS-UNOWA workplan.

31. UNOWA was represented at the fourth subregional meeting of heads of United Nations human rights field presences held in Niamey from 3 to 5 February, which reviewed the human rights situation in the subregion, focusing on human rights in electoral processes; combating impunity; gender and human rights in the context of the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women; human trafficking, migration; and climate change. The meeting adopted a joint action plan on human rights for United Nations entities in West Africa.

B. Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

32. The demonstrated determination of the regional organizations (ECOWAS and the African Union) to restore and strengthen democratic rule in the region, with support from the United Nations, has been very encouraging. This partnership was also pursued through the participation of the Office in various meetings and forums, including meetings of the International Contact Group on Guinea, the thirty-seventh

ECOWAS ordinary summit held on 16 February 2010 in Abuja, and the 27th meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff, held in Cotonou from 14 to 17 April 2010, during which UNOWA brought a United Nations perspective to the discussions on the prevailing security challenges in the subregion. In the framework of its support to ECOWAS, UNOWA is currently assisting ECOWAS with the revision of its Protocol on democracy and good governance. The draft document is being discussed by the two institutions at present.

33. In an effort to strengthen its cooperation with the Mano River Union, UNOWA fielded a mission to the Mano River Union secretariat in Freetown from 5 to 12 March, to identify areas of cooperation between the two organizations in furtherance of peace and stability. As a result, a joint framework for cooperation is currently being developed in areas such as the promotion of violence-free elections, security sector reform, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

C. Cross-border and cross-cutting issues

Governance and security sector reform

34. In the reporting period, UNOWA stepped up its support for ECOWAS efforts and facilitated the work of United Nations entities on security sector reform in West Africa, while ensuring overall coherence with the African Union's continental vision. It hosted, on 18 and 19 February in Dakar, a meeting with ECOWAS in support of the development of a West African regional framework and plan of action on security sector governance and reform. Preceded by a workshop co-organized by the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the UNOWA/ECOWAS meeting provided inputs to the draft ECOWAS plan of action and recommended the establishment of a regional forum of security sector reform practitioners and experts. It also prepared the ground for the joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations efforts on security sector reform in Guinea.

35. The three-month-long joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations security sector assessment mission in Guinea was designed under the leadership of ECOWAS with the support of the United Nations (UNOWA, the United Nations Development Programme/Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations country team) and was later reinforced by associated experts from the European Union, the United States and the International Organization of la Francophonie, which provided expert advice and guidance to the interim authorities. It was launched on 1 February in Conakry and concluded on 4 May with the presentation of the report to the Guinean Interim President by my Special Representative on behalf of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations.

Drug trafficking and organized crime

36. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued to support initiatives and efforts to prevent and combat drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa. UNOWA backed up the ECOWAS Commission in its efforts to develop a regional action plan, notably through the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Drugs and Crime to the President of the Commission. The preparatory phase of

the establishment of transnational crime units in the context of the West Africa Coast Initiative, which was initiated with the launching of the Initiative in New York on 8 July 2009, was completed with the assessment missions to Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in early 2010, in which UNOWA participated. A consolidated report on this phase was adopted by the pilot countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone) during the ministerial meeting on the Initiative held in Freetown on 17 February, in which UNOWA took part. The outcome of that meeting was the signing of the Freetown Commitment on Combating Illicit Trafficking of Drugs and Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa, which provided political backing to the implementation of the Initiative. Participating officials affirmed the commitment of their countries to ratify and implement the relevant international conventions and treaties to strengthen cross-border collaboration and to establish the transitional crime units. The operational development of the Initiative began in the aftermath of that ministerial meeting. On the basis of the outcome of several United Nations inter-agency meetings described in section IV (A), UNOWA has continued to focus on mobilizing political will for and coordinating United Nations inputs into the Initiative project, including through the development of an inter-agency workplan expected to be validated by mid-2010, in close coordination with the other Initiative partners, UNODC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the International Criminal Police Organization, as well as with the concerned United Nations peace missions (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, United Nations Mission in Liberia and United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire).

Human rights and gender

37. UNOWA continued to support and facilitate the activities of the regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa established in April 2009, including facilitating its monthly meetings. On 8 February, a directory of institutions working on human rights and gender in West Africa, published and widely disseminated in the subregion by UNOWA, was jointly launched by my Special Representative and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Director for Africa. The launching ceremony offered an opportunity for UNOWA, UNIFEM and other members of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to review and adopt the 2010 joint annual workplan for the implementation of the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women.

38. In furtherance of its partnership with the African Union, UNOWA attended the second Conference on the Question of the Death Penalty in Africa, in Cotonou, from 12 to 15 April, organized by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for North and West Africa. The conference recommended the drafting of an African Union protocol on the abolition of the death penalty. As the only entity of the United Nations in attendance, UNOWA sensitized the participants on the perspective of the Organization for a progressive abolition of the death penalty, as set out in General Assembly resolution 62/149 of 18 December 2007, on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty. UNOWA also attended the Africa regional conference on the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, jointly organized in Dakar from 27 to 28 April by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Association for the Prevention of Torture and Amnesty International. The conference adopted an eight-point strategy for universal ratification and an effective implementation of the Optional Protocol in Africa. My Special Representative was

solicited to help in promoting an advocacy campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture in Africa.

39. In the margins of the forty-seventh session of the African Commission on Human Rights, held in Banjul from 12 to 26 May, UNOWA organized a series of panel discussions with the African Union and human rights experts on thematic human rights issues impacting on peace and security, including climate change, poverty, trafficking in persons and women, peace and security. During the panel discussions participants called on UNOWA to work together with UNIFEM, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the African Union to organize a regional conference on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). UNOWA is planning to hold this conference in the second half of 2010.

D. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

40. During the period under review, UNOWA continued to provide support to demarcation of the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. Field work was pursued, although the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission was not able to hold its twenty-sixth session as initially scheduled on 4 and 5 March 2010 because of technical problems. Cameroon and Nigeria have so far agreed on a total distance of 1,463 kilometres for the land boundary, which is estimated to be 1,950 kilometres. Pillar emplacement activities undertaken under the management of the United Nations Office for Project Services have continued through the reporting period, with some 175 kilometres of boundary now permanently demarcated.

41. The completion of all land boundary demarcation activities will depend on ensuring continuing funding from extrabudgetary sources for the remaining demarcation contracts. The agreement with the European Commission that is currently providing funds for the completion of the demarcation activities will terminate on 30 October 2010.

42. The commitment of Cameroon and Nigeria to maintain good neighbourly relations was further reinforced by the attendance of President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria at the National Day celebrations of Cameroon on 20 May. Following that, on 27 May, President Paul Biya of Cameroon sent his Minister-Delegate for Justice to Nigeria to discuss matters of common interest, including all pending issues related to withdrawal and transfer of authority in the Bakassi Peninsula.

V. Observations and recommendations

43. I am pleased to note the progress made in some West African countries in consolidating peace, democratic governance and human rights. However, these positive trends continued to be undermined by governance challenges. The situation presented in this report calls for West Africa and its partners to continue to invest more efforts in consolidating good governance and respect for the rule of law, as well as fostering an enabling environment for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

44. Ten years after the launch of the Millennium Development Goals, and five years from the target deadline of 2015, West African countries should assess and

accelerate progress towards their achievement. As recommended by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in their latest report entitled *The Millennium Development Goals after the Crisis*, West African countries should give priority to and remain focused on creating an enabling environment for economic activities and poverty alleviation, enhancing the support to institutional reforms, and the attainment of development goals.

45. I note with appreciation the enhanced cooperation between UNOWA and regional organizations, particularly with ECOWAS and the African Union, as exemplified in the significant increase in the number of joint initiatives and activities in preventive diplomacy, security sector reform and conflict management. I am also encouraged by the strengthened collaboration among United Nations entities in the subregion aimed at better supporting the efforts of the subregion in strengthening governance and addressing humanitarian challenges.

46. I welcome the initiative of development and humanitarian actors to undertake joint actions in support of the Governments and populations affected by the food crisis. I appeal to Member States to provide prompt and generous support for humanitarian operations in the Sahel region through the consolidated appeal process and other mechanisms, in order to avert a major humanitarian crisis, which could potentially lead to violent conflicts, suffering and loss of life. Beyond short-term emergency responses, the recurrent and complex nature of the food crisis and malnutrition in this part of the Sahel and West Africa calls for comprehensive long-term strategies and policies aimed at addressing the underlying causes in a consistent and sustainable manner, including by adopting preparedness measures.

47. I call on the leaders of West Africa to reinforce their national policies to combat cross-border criminal activities and terrorist threats, particularly in the Sahel Band. I commend the decision of the Sahel countries to combat insecurity in this area in an integrated and coordinated manner. The cross-border dimension of criminal activities and terrorist threats in the Sahel calls for a regional approach to reinforce national policies, as recommended by the Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/20) dated 10 July 2009. The countries and populations of the Sahel can more effectively fight terrorist activities and organized crime through strong partnerships and cross-border collaboration. The United Nations will develop a more coordinated response on the Sahel, including the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the region.

48. While an increasing number of countries in the subregion are holding regular elections, there is still room for improving the frameworks in which these elections are held. Developments in this area should be kept under active consideration, as a high number of elections are scheduled to take place in West Africa in the near future. In this context, I wish to renew my previous appeals for all possible steps to be taken to reduce the potentials for election-related violence in West Africa. The United Nations will continue to monitor the situation and play an active role in this area.

49. I am also concerned about the slow implementation of the 2010 round of censuses in West Africa. Foundations for democracy and peace include informed decision-making on policy issues and economic programming, which requires a good knowledge of the size and distribution of the targeted population. Regular population censuses can also be useful monitoring tools for conflict prevention, good governance and planning for economic and social development. The conduct

of censuses requires strong national commitment, leadership and ownership. I call on West African authorities to ensure that population censuses are conducted on a regular basis. Investing in regular and credible censuses, including civilian registration, is part of the United Nations commitment to make governance in West Africa legitimate, transparent and accountable. The United Nations will continue to assist West African countries in capacity-building and resource mobilization for population censuses.

50. Reports of incidents of violations of human rights in the subregion are also a matter of concern. Given the sensitivity of faith and ethnic-based violence, I urge Governments, civil society organizations and community leaders to develop mechanisms, with the support of the international community, for addressing situations of tension. I also call on the countries of West Africa to work, in close collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and civil society, including women's organizations, towards the development of a regional action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

51. I am encouraged to see that the situation in Guinea has evolved positively in the last six months. I welcome the fact that the Guinean transition authorities maintained the date of 27 June 2010 proposed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) for the first round of the presidential elections and the effort to undertake security sector reform with the support of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. Guinea also needs support in order to develop and implement long-term development plans.

52. I am encouraged by the fact that the Government of the Niger acknowledged the food crisis and is working to restore democratic rule and to address the humanitarian crisis in the country. I am also encouraged to see that the transitional authorities decided on the shortest possible transition and not to stand for the next elections. The Niger needs support from its international partners to address its socio-economic challenges.

53. Bearing in mind the multifaceted challenges in the subregion, the need to focus on good offices in preventive diplomacy and conflict management, governance issues, including elections and security sector reform, remain. UNOWA will continue to play a catalytic role in helping ECOWAS and the Mano River Union strengthen their capacities to intervene more effectively in conflict prevention and crisis management. It will also assist them in developing an integrated regional approach in such priority areas as democratic governance, human rights and gender. Furthermore, UNOWA will endeavour, with its partners in West Africa, to effectively integrate humanitarian and development dimensions into conflict prevention and management strategies.

54. Despite the commencement of the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Plan of Action, a lot more still needs to be done to address the continued and pervasive drug trafficking problem in West Africa. UNOWA will continue to play an active role in the regional and international efforts to combat drug trafficking, particularly in support of the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Plan of Action and the West Africa Coast Initiative. Beyond continued operationalization of the West Africa Coast Initiative project, I encourage ECOWAS and its international partners to work for the implementation of all other aspects of the Regional Action Plan. For UNOWA to fully play its role in this regard, it will need to strengthen its

technical and strategic police advisory capacity. I recommend that this strengthened capacity be reflected in the next mandate of UNOWA.

55. I also take note with appreciation of the significant progress achieved so far by Cameroon and Nigeria in the demarcation process of their boundary. I commend Presidents Paul Biya of Cameroon and Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria for their unrelenting efforts aimed at building good neighbourly relations between their two countries and peoples. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the Follow-up Committee will continue to play an active role in support of the process with a view to overcoming the remaining challenges and paving the way for the conclusion of this unprecedented example of peaceful conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

56. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the West African States, to ECOWAS, to the African Union and to the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation. I also extend my gratitude to the United Nations entities in West Africa, civil society organizations and other partners for their continued collaboration with UNOWA in the implementation of its mandate. I wish to thank my Special Representative, Said Djinnit, especially for his critical role during the negotiations in Guinea, as well as the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their valuable contribution to peace and stability in the subregion.